

REMARKS

Claims 18-21 are presented for consideration, with Claim 18 being independent.

Independent Claim 18 has been amended to further distinguish Applicants' invention from the cited art. Support for the amendment to Claim 18 can be found, for example, on page 21, line 10, *et. seq.*, of the specification.

Claims 18-21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as allegedly being obvious over Fukumoto '146 in view of Wugoski '392 and Bertram '546. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 18 of Applicants' invention is directed to a function assignment method for function keys of an operation device, comprising sequentially the steps of displaying a prescribed hierarchical level menu comprising a plurality of prescribed items, selecting by a user one of the prescribed items, displaying, on a same screen with the prescribed hierarchical level menu, a lower hierarchical level according to the selected item among the prescribed items, the lower hierarchical level menu comprising a plurality of items, and selecting by the user one of the lower items. Additional steps include displaying, on the same screen with the prescribed and lower hierarchical level menu, a registration menu comprising registration items relating to the function keys, according to selection of one of items in the lowest hierarchical level menu, selecting by a user one of the registration items, and assigning a function according to a set of the selected items in each hierarchical level menu to the function key relating to the selected registration item with one-to-one correspondence.

As amended, Claim 18 sets forth that while selecting the lower items, and when the user presses a determination key of the operation device for a time period equal or

longer than a predetermined time period, the registration menu is displayed to enable the user to perform the registration operation, and when the user presses the determination key for a time period shorter than the predetermined time period, the menu display process is terminated without displaying the registration menu.

In accordance with Applicants' claimed invention, a high performance function assignment method is provided.

The primary citation to Fukumoto relates to a customized menu system design that allows a user to select an adjustable item with a small number of menu operations.

Fukumoto is said to teach displaying a prescribed hierarchical level menu with prescribed items, and displaying, on the same screen as the prescribed hierarchical level menu, a lower hierarchical level menu comprising lower items.

The secondary citation to Wugoski relates to a user interface system and is relied upon for its teaching of presenting a user with a registration menu comprising items that relate to function keys, after the user has inputted a desired series of inputs to define a function.

Finally, the patent to Bertram relates to a programming structure and is cited for displaying hierarchical level menus in a cascading fashion with first and second hierarchical level menus being displayed on the same screen.

It is respectfully submitted that the cited art, whether taken alone or in combination, fails to teach or suggest, among other features, a function assignment method wherein, while selecting the lower items of the lower hierarchical level menu, when the user presses a determination key of the operation device for a time period equal or longer than a predetermined time period, the registration menu is displayed to enable the user to perform the registration operation, and when the user presses the determination key for a time period shorter

than the predetermined time period, the menu display process is terminated without displaying the registration menu. It is submitted, therefore, that the proposed combination of art, even if proper, still fails to teach or suggest Applicants' invention. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §103 is deemed to be in order and such action is respectfully requested.

Thus, it is submitted that Applicants' invention as set forth in independent Claim 18 is patentable over the cited art. In addition, dependent Claims 19-21 set forth additional features of Applicants' invention. Independent consideration of the dependent claims is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of this application is deemed to be in order and such action is respectfully requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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